

STAFF SURVEY

2008

Department of Health and Social Services

Office of Children's Services

Office of Children's Services Staff Survey

Section I - Introduction

The Evaluation Unit of the Office of Children's Services conducted a survey of staff in July 2008. Each employee of the Office of Children's Services was included in the electronic distribution of the survey. The survey was forwarded to a total of 426 staff with 326 responses received for a response rate of 77 percent. The survey was sent to all staff with three follow-up contacts to those who had not responded. The survey sought information regarding the overall operation of the agency.

Respondents were able to skip questions they wished to, thus the data for each question will not total to the total number of overall survey respondents. Questions which provided for a narrative response have been summarized. The following report presents the findings from the 2008 survey.

• Descriptive Information

Information regarding the respondents is presented in Tables 1-4. The number of responses, job titles of respondents, and years at the agency and in the current job position are presented.

Table 1

Survey Responses by Year and Percent			
Year	Number of Surveys Sent	Number of Respondents	Percent of Responses
2008	426	326	77%

Table 2

Respondents by Job Title and Percent	
Job Title	Percent of Respondents
Administrative/Clerical Support Staff	13%
Children's Services Manager	1%
Community Care Licensing Specialist	7%
Eligibility Technician	2%
Independent Living Specialist	0.3%
Mental Health Clinician	1%
ORCA Support Staff	1%
Psychiatric Nurse	2%
Social Service Associate	9%
Social Worker I-III/Children's Services Specialist I-III	42%
Social Worker IV/Children's Services Supervisor IV	11%
Social Worker V/Staff Manager	2%
State Office Program Staff	7%
Other	3%

N = 321

Table 3

Period of Time Respondents Employed at Office of Children's Services by Number and Percent		
Number of Years	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Less than a year	49	15%
One to two years	71	22%
Three to five years	90	28%
Six to ten years	69	22%
More than ten years	42	13%

N = 321

Table 4

Respondents' Years in Current Position by Number and Percent		
Number of Years	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Less than a year	88	25%
One to two years	123	35%
Three to five years	81	23%
Six to ten years	44	12%
More than ten years	21	6%

N = 323

Section II - State and Regional Offices' Communication with the Field

This area of the survey asked staff to respond to questions regarding communication with the state and regional offices. Tables 4 through 16 present the questions and findings.

Table 5

The goals of the Office of Children's Services are clearly communicated to staff and are understood by staff		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	47	16%
Agree	173	58%
Undecided	35	12%
Disagree	37	12%
Strongly Disagree	8	3%

N = 299

Table 6

Leadership which establishes clear direction for the agency is provided through my regional office		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	28	9%
Agree	120	40%
Undecided	71	24%
Disagree	59	20%
Strongly Disagree	20	7%

N = 297

Table 7

My regional office provides information which clearly describes the model of practice and defines the approach to case intervention		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	32	11%
Agree	131	45%
Undecided	76	26%
Disagree	43	15%
Strongly Disagree	9	3%

N = 290

Table 8

There are established methods of communication from state office and my regional office through memorandums and meetings which keep me informed of the activities of the agency		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	21	7%
Agree	135	46%
Undecided	62	21%
Disagree	62	21%
Strongly Disagree	14	5%

N = 293

Table 9

The Pipeline Newsletter helps to keep me informed regarding state wide agency activities		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	25	8%
Agree	160	54%
Undecided	75	25%
Disagree	32	11%
Strongly Disagree	6	2%

N = 297

Table 10

I regularly receive copies of Quality Assurance Reports prepared by the State Office Evaluation Unit		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	37	13%
Agree	137	48%
Undecided	58	20%
Disagree	43	15%
Strongly Disagree	13	5%

N = 287

Table 11

I am knowledgeable about changes in my region which are planned in response to the findings of quality assurance activities		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	10	4%
Agree	82	28%
Undecided	92	32%
Disagree	87	30%
Strongly Disagree	19	7%

N = 289

Table 12

I am able to share information and give suggestions to regional and state office management through attendance at meetings, discussions with my supervisor and other means		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	35	12%
Agree	129	44%
Undecided	45	15%
Disagree	62	21%
Strongly Disagree	25	9%

N = 295

Table 13

There are opportunities for workers, through direct communication or committee work, to influence the organizational operation and service delivery		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	17	6%
Agree	98	33%
Undecided	64	22%
Disagree	73	25%
Strongly Disagree	44	15%

N = 295

Table 14

Leadership which establishes clear direction for the agency is provided through the state office		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	16	6%
Agree	98	34%
Undecided	89	31%
Disagree	60	21%
Strongly Disagree	30	10%

N = 292

Table 15

The state office provides information which clearly describes the model of practice and defines the approach to case intervention		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	23	8%
Agree	126	43%
Undecided	71	24%
Disagree	52	18%
Strongly Disagree	21	7%

N = 292

Table 16

The agency, through the efforts of both the state office and the regional offices, effectively communicates its mission with the larger community		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	10	3%
Agree	95	32%
Undecided	88	30%
Disagree	83	28%
Strongly Disagree	18	6%

N = 293

Section III - Staff Training and Development – This section of the survey asked staff to respond to questions regarding their experiences in receiving training and other staff development activities. Tables 17 through 23 present the findings.

Table 17

In my experience in working with community agencies, I believe the Office of Children's Services has strong working relationships with the community		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	31	10%
Agree	122	41%
Undecided	75	25%
Disagree	54	18%
Strongly Disagree	16	5%

N = 297

Table 18

I receive feedback from my supervisor regarding my performance which is useful in making changes in my work		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	69	24%
Agree	136	47%
Undecided	25	9%
Disagree	42	14%
Strongly Disagree	19	7%

N = 291

Table 19

My supervisor is available and responsive to questions I have regarding my work		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	101	35%
Agree	125	43%
Undecided	14	5%
Disagree	35	12%
Strongly Disagree	13	5%

N = 288

Table 20

I have received training which provided information to enable me to do my job		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	37	13%
Agree	142	49%
Undecided	38	13%
Disagree	54	18%
Strongly Disagree	22	8%

N = 293

Table 21

I have received sufficient information/training on how to document my case work in ORCA		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	37	13%
Agree	129	46%
Undecided	49	17%
Disagree	52	18%
Strongly Disagree	18	6%

N = 282

Staff Comments: Respondents were asked to indicate in which areas they would like to receive additional training and ongoing education. There were 175 respondents who made one or more comments. The listing below provides a summary of their suggestions.

1. Effective documentation
2. Medicaid
3. Supervisory training and training on progressive discipline
4. ORCA – both initial and ongoing
5. Licensing training and licensing workers should receive ORCA training
6. Cross Cultural to include more groups, undoing racism
7. Safety Assessment and its relationship to permanency, information on impending danger, focus on real life implementation, training for consistency of implementation
8. Policy and Procedure
9. Broader trainings for administrative and clerical people, such as business English and telephone etiquette.
10. Interviewing skills with parents and children,
11. TONE in a timely manner, consider SSA and Administrative Clerk attendance at TONE, consider adding ORCA to TONE, more hands on experiences in TONE
12. Intake training – what questions to ask
13. Eligibility Technicians need access to Excel training – classes fill within an hour of being posted
14. Eligibility Technicians need more training in the other data bases used in their work
15. Training on how to deal with substance abuse and domestic violence, prescription drugs
16. Court procedures – how a case moves through court, the different petitions etc. How the criminal process interacts/relates to the CINA process
17. Child development and early childhood education, evidenced based practice
18. AKSAS, Resenx, AkPay, Alder training
19. Employment practices, EEO, hiring
20. How to write legal reports for investigation of foster homes
21. Mental health issues with children and medications
22. Clinical supervision of child protection cases
23. Child Welfare management and administration
24. SSA job specific training
25. Due diligence
26. Retention of staff/burnout prevention/how to motivate staff
27. Community relations partner building
28. Case plan development with special populations, case plan development with parents
29. Management training
30. How to promote foster care recruitment
31. Legal training – testimony, legal documentation
32. Strengthening families parenting skills
33. Clerical training in Outlook, Excel, and ORCA

- 34. Working with resistant clients, mental health conditions, or FASD
- 35. Drug testing and understanding the results
- 36. Leadership, self care, and team building
- 37. Supervisory access to advanced Excel training
- 38. Communication and facilitation training
- 39. Community resources for clients with no/limited financial resources
- 40. Paid for training that meets social work licensing requirements
- 41. Travel training
- 42. Investigation training
- 43. Working with families where sexual abuse is an issue
- 44. Parent skills training
- 45. Current research, best practice
- 46. Visitation training
- 47. ICWA, Adoptions

Retention of experienced workers is important to the Office of Children's Services. Employees were asked to respond to a question regarding the reasons they choose to continue to work at the Office of Children's Services. The respondents were able to select as many options as they choose, thus the number of respondents column are greater than the total number of respondents to the survey.

Table 22

Please check the areas which reflect reasons you have continued to choose to work at the Office of Children's Services		
Reason	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
The job duties match my training and background	157	55%
I have decided to pursue a professional career in child welfare	102	36%
My job duties are challenging and allow me to use my skills, talents, and problem solving abilities	195	68%
The pay and benefits are commensurate with the work	67	24%
I value the opportunity for an alternate work week	66	23%
I enjoy the challenges of working to insure the well-being of children	194	68%
My co-workers contribute to and make my job satisfying	157	55%
I value the security and benefits of working for the state	161	57%
I enjoy the professional atmosphere of the agency	49	17%
I believe in the mission and goals of the agency	157	55%
I enjoy working with other state agencies or community agencies	111	39%

N = 285

Staff Comments: Staff were invited to provide information on other areas which caused them to continue to work at the Office of Children Services. There were 94 respondents who provided one or more comments. The narrative below provides a summary of their comments.

- Workers cited the importance of the work. They described the value of children and families and the opportunities to make a difference. Working in the community to develop positive relationships was cited as important. Workers also commented on the variety of tasks within the job and the daily challenges.
- Many respondents spoke at length of the positive relationships they have had with supervisors. The importance of an experienced supervisor when a caseworker is newly employed was stressed. As well, many spoke of the support they gain from their co-workers as a factor in remaining at the agency.
- The opportunity for a flexible work week was cited by many respondents as one of the reasons contributing to their decision to stay with the agency. Also, the opportunities to change jobs within the agency was cited as a supportive factor.
- Many respondents cited the pay and benefits as an encouragement to stay with the agency. The opportunity for medical coverage was noted as well as the retirement plan. In addition, the proximity of the workplace to their homes was cited by several respondents.
- The importance of working to decrease the disproportionate numbers of some groups in the case population was cited. The importance of being the front line worker in villages was commented on. The importance of keeping children in their regions was cited.
- Providing for the care and safety of children was repeatedly cited as a reason for remaining with the agency.

The Office of Children's Services is interested to know the ideas employees feel would help retain staff. Respondents were asked to respond to ways in which the Office of Children's Services could work to retain staff. The respondents were able to select up to three options from a list provided, thus the number of respondents column are greater than the total number of respondents to the survey.

Table 23

Please check the three main areas that you believe would help the Office of Children's Services retain staff		
Reason	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Increased recognition for work accomplishments	107	37%
Increased pay and benefits	211	73%
Greater autonomy in work decisions	53	18%
A better work environment (i.e. office space, furniture, supplies)	59	20%
Increased opportunities to attend trainings	107	37%
Increased opportunities to influence agency procedures	87	30%
Opportunities for the alternate work week	77	27%
Improved quality of supervision	103	36%
Increased clerical support	91	31%
Increased case (SSA) support	106	37%
Alternate staff to cover vacant caseloads	93	32%
Overall reduction in workloads	180	62%

N = 290

Staff Comments: Staff were invited to provide other suggestions for the Office of Children's Services attracting and retaining a strong workforce. The following narrative provides a summary of the responses. There were 134 staff who made one or more comments.

- Many staff indicated that their present workload was not effectively manageable given the job duties required. Staff indicated a need for the number of cases to decrease at the agency to more manageable levels. Several respondents commented on the standards set forth by the Child Welfare League of America. Those staff commenting on workload issues feel that having a caseload of approximately 12 to 15 investigations/permanency cases would allow their work with families to be more concentrated and provide more time to complete administrative functions of their job including documentation of case activities in ORCA.
- The level of paperwork and documentation required of workers is seen as a barrier to recruiting and retaining staff. Some see ORCA as a barrier to timely completion of paperwork and documentation. Others commented on the value and time saving that the ORCA system provides in accessing case related information without having to sort through a hard file page by page. Many workers commented that they would like to see more SSA's hired at the agency to provide support to line staff.
- Workers cited the need for increased support for newly hired workers. Comments received reflect that new workers are often overwhelmed with training and being given a high number of cases immediately rather than allowing for a transition period to occur. There is a need for increased support to these workers from their supervisors.
- There were comments received pertaining to staff recognition efforts at the Office of Children's Services. Those commenting about work recognition efforts indicate that more attention needs to be given to line workers from regional staff and management. Staff commented that there is little being done to recognize workers' efforts with families on their caseloads. Suggestions for this area included expanding the recognition emails in some regions to include recognition for people in all job categories (i.e. line staff, clerical, SSA, supervisors, licensing, etc.) Other suggestions include giving awards to workers on a statewide level who achieve a certain monthly goal. Some workers commented that their supervisors overlook their efforts. This leads to low morale and not feeling valued in the workplace for the job that is being done.

Staff Comments Continued:

- Several staff offered suggestions for establishing the alternate workweek and making it available to all staff even in rural field offices as a way to retain workers. Being able to have an extra day off every other week or working four 10-hour shifts each week was noted as a way to retain seasoned workers at the agency. Some staff commented that they would like to see a flexible work schedule and cited that a flexible schedule would allow them to balance work with family.
- Many staff provided comments about salary and benefits. Workers would like to see their salary and benefits aligned with the job duties they perform. Comments reflected the unequal pay between the Children's Services Specialist job class and the Social Worker job class.
- Supervision and the accessibility of supervisors in the field offices was a common theme among those workers who provided comments. Many workers stated that their immediate supervisor is more often than not unavailable for consultation about case issues. Comments also reflected that there are inconsistencies in practice among supervisors within the same field office. Several respondents indicated that they are not receiving regular supervision and that when they ask to talk to their supervisor they feel as though they are burdening them.
- Staff commented that more workers are needed at the line level to complete all the necessary job duties. Staff comments in this area noted that more staff is needed on a clerical level, SSA level, and worker level. Several staff indicated that they see regional office positions and more state office positions added at a higher rate than positions for the field. Comments reflected a perception of lack of support from state office, regional office, and local supervisors for the needs and concerns of line staff. Staff in the field commented that they are afraid to bring these issues up for fear of being labeled as a complainer.
- Training and professional licensure for staff was a common theme for ways in which the Office of Children's Services could retain staff. Training is seen as an important element to workforce development at the agency, yet not enough training is offered to help workers enhance their professional develop and gain knowledge. Comments were received in this area that reflect workers' desire for more training. Suggestions for retention include efforts by the agency to pay for training for those workers required to maintain professional licenses, cost reimbursement or sharing for licensing fees, and a possible program through the state for student loan forgiveness for workers who remain at the agency for their career.

Staff Comments Continued:

- Some workers commented on their individual work environment. Comments received in this area ranged from those workers who have inadequate workspace and furniture to workers comments on the "office politics" that occur in the agency. Staff that indicated inadequate work space and furniture was a barrier commented that working in a cubicle and not having space to do worker supervision was a barrier at the agency. More space is needed in order to provide workers with a comfortable work environment. Some workers commented on the relationships and attitudes they observe in their office by their superiors as being disruptive and harmful to the overall work environment. Staff commented that favoritism occurs at the agency and often leads to worker not feeling valued or appreciated for the work they do. Other comments in this area reflected that opportunities for advancement within the agency were largely dependant on the status of your relationship with the person hiring rather than qualifications.
- The need for increased funding to conduct the business of the Office of Children's Services was commented on by many staff. This is of particular concern in rural Alaska where travel expenses and cost of living expenses are greater than in urban areas. The state travel office as well as regional staff who frequently make arbitrary decisions about what funds are approved are seen as a barrier to staff in rural field offices.
- Many staff offered suggestions for increased communication through all levels of the agency. Staff want to be included in the decision-making process more and not simply told what to do through a memo. Communication from state office was commented on as a need for workers and line staff in the field. Workers reported that there will be decisions made at the state office level which are never directly communicated to them and then when an error is made, the line staff is blamed and told they should have known better. Management needs to be consistent throughout the four regions. Comments were received that there needs to be more openness from supervisors and managers in the day-to-day practice that occurs at the Office of Children's Services.

Section IV – This area of the survey asked staff to respond to questions regarding support for program and case activities. Tables 24 through 30 present the findings.

Table 24

In general, ORCA is a useful tool to manage case information		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	49	17%
Agree	150	53%
Undecided	38	13%
Disagree	36	13%
Strongly Disagree	11	4%

N = 284

Table 25

When needed, there is available support in a timely manner to assist me with ORCA questions and issues		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	74	26%
Agree	141	49%
Undecided	36	13%
Disagree	27	9%
Strongly Disagree	9	3%

N = 287

Table 26

When I have questions regarding the operation of my computer or I need direct assistance, there is timely IT response to my needs		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	46	16%
Agree	152	53%
Undecided	35	12%
Disagree	46	16%
Strongly Disagree	10	4%

N = 289

Table 27

The policy and procedures manual and other written directions that guide my job are clear and helpful		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	12	4%
Agree	105	37%
Undecided	67	23%
Disagree	75	26%
Strongly Disagree	27	9%

N = 286

Table 28

There are opportunities for me to make suggestions for changes and upgrades to the policy and procedure manual and they are considered		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	10	4%
Agree	68	24%
Undecided	93	33%
Disagree	80	28%
Strongly Disagree	39	14%

N = 286

Table 29

When policy and procedures are developed, they are disseminated throughout the agency in a timely manner		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	18	6%
Agree	139	48%
Undecided	76	26%
Disagree	39	14%
Strongly Disagree	16	6%

N = 288

Table 30

I have the necessary office supplies and office furniture to carry out my job duties		
Level of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Strongly Agree	49	17%
Agree	145	50%
Undecided	23	8%
Disagree	45	16%
Strongly Disagree	28	10%

N = 290

Section V – Final Comments

In concluding the survey, a final area was provided for staff to give comments that they felt were important and helpful to the agency. There were 109 staff who made one or more comments. Six areas were identified to organize and sort the comments. The following narrative provides a summary of the comments under each area.

Policy and Program Development:

- There were concerns expressed that policy is not always kept current. Several examples were cited including the delays in developing the safety assessment policy and the lack of current material in the ORCA Manuals. It was noted that the model case file is out of date and materials for families such as the Handbook for Parents is not current. There were overall concerns expressed for the status of the Policy and Procedure Manual and the need for it to be kept current.
- The lack of “balance” in programming was discussed. It was noted that the agency has focused on the safety assessment process to the exclusion of the other parts of a child welfare program. The Independent Living Program was cited as being under developed and not fulfilling its mission of supporting youth to independence. It was suggested that the implementation of the Independent Living Program be reviewed by management.

- There was a concern expressed that the Office of Children's Services tries to do too many things in too many places, and as a result the programs lack focus. It was noted that although we articulate the vision and goals of the Office of Children's Services, we do not always use them to guide practice. There was concern expressed that agencies outside of the Office of Children's Services have been allowed to drive policy.
- It was noted that there is a lack of consistency between supervisors in implementing policy and procedure. The safety assessment process was given as an example, where with one case there would be two different decisions. There was concern that supervisors, rather than implementing policy, "tweak" the case to suit their own needs for the direction of the case such as closed without further services, in-home services, or permanency services. Another respondent described situations in which children are left in unsafe conditions while the Office of Children's Services "waits for another report" to come in.

Management and Supervisory:

- A comment was received noting the quality of the worker's "superb" supervisor, quality of co-workers, and the general positive attitude of the office as being contributing factors so that this worker felt he/she was able to make a difference in the lives of children and families.
- There were several comments noting that the Office of Children's Services is "on its way." Satisfaction with the direction of the agency was expressed and with the leadership guiding the efforts.
- The openness of the director in listening to staff was identified by a respondent. Another respondent discussed her dedicated and stable leadership focusing on priorities such as children's safety, decreasing the number of disproportionately represent groups, and strengthening community partnerships.
- The need for an open work environment where the director and management would come and listen, with no retaliation, was expressed. This respondent described the work environment as becoming one where "who do you know" guides the activities. It was noted that if the same problems keep occurring and you have the same management and supervisory structure, then it is perhaps time for a change.
- There was concern that for staff who have studied social work and view child welfare as their profession, that they are often discounted and devalued.

- There was a need expressed that when workers are criticized from outside the agency, that the agency needs to provide increased support and backing for the worker. It was noted that if workers received more recognition from management in the form of occasional phone calls for their work, it would help balance some of the negative input from outside the agency.
- An observation was made that the allocation of "resources" is not equally distributed. It was noted that administration continues to add name brand furniture to their offices and furnish every cubicle with a printer while the field offices struggle to obtain basic supplies.
- There was concern expressed that positions at times appear to be given on the basis of friendship rather than an analyze of the experience of the workers who might also like to be considered.
- The need for the agency to operate in a congruent manner and not be in crisis mode was identified. There was a need identified for Children's Services Managers and Staff Managers to be on one accord in decision making.
- One respondent identified their desire that management make a formal response after the results of the staff survey are received. Another respondent noted the importance of every comment/suggestion and that none should go unrecognized.
- There were several comments by respondents that staff should be held accountable for work practices that do not meet standards. Another suggested that when mistakes are made, they should be discussed so that better practice can be learned. Another respondent described a work environment which is hostile, where one staff is allowed to produce an uncomfortable work environment but supervision to that worker is not provided. This has caused several senior staff to consider leaving the agency. Other respondents described managers who engage in personal friendships which precludes workers' ability to access and challenge the managers. Supervisors who engage in "gossip" about line workers was identified as an area of concern. The need for clerical workers to be supportive and professional in their contacts with staff was stressed.

Resource Needs:

- ORCA was frequently mentioned by respondents. It was noted that it is a good system but still has many issues to be worked through. The lack of support staff to accurately input information in a timely manner was listed by several respondents as a major area of concern. This lack of documentation is a cause for concern when a new worker is trying to learn basic information about a case and to provide continuity of case management. Others expressed concerns regarding the amount of time required for a worker to enter case documentation and that this detracts from their direct work with families. There were concerns regarding the lack of financial data entry into ORCA. The lack of legal

documentation in rural offices was cited as a need. There were concerns expressed that one ORCA helpline worker simply tells staff who call to "read the How to Guide," which might call into question why the help position is needed. The extensive time required to complete a request for funds through the supervisory approval process was noted. There were comments regarding the need for immediate availability of ORCA and IT staff to enable workers to carry out their tasks in a timely manner. There were concerns that input of line staff who work daily with the system are not sought out when changes to ORCA are made. It was noted there are functions that are not usable and several functions "the approval process" which delay workers from completing their casework.

- The need for more copiers, scanners, and voice activated dictation that goes directly to email were cited as needs to assist workers in accomplishing their tasks.
- There were several comments about the need for relief for on-call staff. Staff stressed the difficulty of working full time and then having to serve on call.
- There were extensive comments about the size of the workload and the ability for workers to get their jobs done. The need for support staff for workers was cited.
- The need for private office space for supervisors was cited. The need for confidentiality and privacy of supervision was described. A respondent also described the need for all workers to have a private office and not have to share an office. The privacy of working with families and the need to be able to concentrate on case issues was cited as a need.
- Training in Outlook was cited as a need. There was also a concern expressed regarding TONE trainers who appear not to have any child protection work experience. It was felt this was an inadequate knowledge base from which to be preparing child protection workers.
- The need for clean, serviceable furniture for workers was identified. In addition, provision of office supplies was a theme in several workers responses. It was described as a demeaning experience to ask for supplies, one comment being that they are doled out as though they were the clerk's personal dollars. In one office, if the clerk is absent, there is no way to access supplies. One worker described purchasing his/her own to avoid the unpleasant experience of asking for supplies. Another worker stated "we are treated like criminals."
- The need for more clerical workers to complete travel entries, pay logs, and random moments studies was identified by one respondent.

- Workers should have access to Dragon Speaks to increase efficiency.
- Caseworkers should be funded to attend the annual maltreatment conference, CASA conferences, and other out of state conferences.

Rural Issues Comments:

- Travel for caseworkers in rural areas was cited as a problem. The state travel office was not seen as effectively meeting the needs of workers. It was suggested that the state travel office requirement be eliminated for rural field offices. The long distance from field offices to the regional office was also cited as causing delays in travel.
- There was a concern described that when changes are made in policy and procedure that rural field offices and the impact on them is not always considered. The need to seek worker and supervisor input on these changes was cited. The spending matrix was noted as being urban oriented having dollars for bus passes but none to fill a four wheeler or snow machine with gas.
- There was a concern expressed that rural offices not be closed. That the needs of families are best met when a local office is there to provide services.
- There was identification that rural offices need to receive better computer services, furniture, phone systems etc. It was noted that there needs to be recognition of the increased time to complete ORCA entries in rural areas. Ten minutes to fill out a pre-travel request was cited as an example. The need for laptop computers for rural workers was stressed. A general comment was made that office accommodations in rural areas are well below standards.
- The need for rural supervisors to "stand up" for workers against the larger field offices was cited.

Staff Development and Retention:

- Many respondents stressed the importance of valuing staff and that all field offices need to be respected. There was notation that there is not enough recognition for administrative and support staff who work to support the front line worker. The need to work with partners in the community such as Judges, GAL's, and providers to increase the respect they display for workers was identified.
- The importance of retaining longer term tenured staff was stressed. Their experience and knowledge base was noted. It was noted that the hiring practices tend to be toward hiring and retaining young new staff.

- The impact of a heavy workload with too many cases was identified by several respondents as a barrier to retaining staff. The need for support staff for workers was identified as one area which might help retention of workers. The opportunity for part-time work and more flexible schedules was also cited as being helpful in retaining staff.
- The importance of immediately posting job vacancies so that the hire process can be timely was cited as a way to reduce the workload of caseworkers who have to carry the extra cases until a position is filled.
- There were concerns expressed regarding additional training funding being directed to TONE. It was felt that there is not enough training for workers who have been at the agency for some time.
- There were several comments on the need for higher salaries for staff. The need for additional paid leave in high stress areas was noted. There was concern expressed that inexperienced workers make the same salary as more experienced workers. The need for support for those who obtain their social work license was identified.
- The need to provide line workers opportunities to serve on work groups was cited. It was noted that current work group members are almost all supervisors. The recruitment and retention workgroup was described as having lost its momentum. It was suggested that the group pick two items and focus its efforts.

Appreciation to Staff

The time that staff took to express their thoughts and suggestions is deeply appreciated by the Office of Children's Services. The findings and comments of the survey serve to inform the Continuous Quality Improvement Process. The information will be used by management in efforts to enhance the work environment and to enable the delivery of quality services to families.